

**Message #47****Mark 12:35-44**

Jesus is in the Temple and He has been challenged by the religious leaders. All the main leaders have taken their shot at Him, trying to trap Him, trying to get something on Him so they could kill Him. They came at Him from different angles, but they could not win against Him.

Now Jesus decided to do some teaching. Apparently His habit was to go to the Temple and teach every day (Mark 14:49). The religious leaders hated Him but the people loved to hear Him.

In fact, **verse 37** says there was a large crowd who gathered who loved to listen to Him. When He spoke, the Word of God came to life. There was power and authority to His teaching. So since He has been challenged by the religious leaders, He decided to speak the truth about them. What we see is this:

**JESUS CHRIST WARNED THE PEOPLE AGAINST PHONY RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO REFUSE TO STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH, BUT WHO LOVE THE RELIGIOUS SHOW AND THEY LOVE THE MONEY.**

Jesus had silenced all of the leaders and now He “turns the tables on them” in front of a very large crowd. He specifically singles out the Scribes (v. 35, 38). These were supposed to be the real religious scholars. They were not right with God, they were religious frauds. Christ is not intimidated by them whatsoever and He decides to do some teaching.

There are basically three teachings He gives that would certainly not be well-received by the religious leaders:

**TEACHING #1** – Jesus teaches about His Identity. **12:35-37**

The first topic that Christ takes up is His own identity. Now to prove His own identity, He starts off by asking a question. The question is this: “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ (Messiah) is the Son of David?” The question is designed to get them to think through O.T. passages that deal with the subject of the Messiah. So the real question is in what sense do these law experts teach you about the Messiah being the Son of David.

Now Jesus doesn’t wait for them to answer. He just launches into another part of Scripture to prove His point. The part Jesus refers to is Psalm 110:1, which the Scribes recognize as “messianic prophecy.”

Jesus says how is it that David, who was led by the Holy Spirit, identified the Messiah as being the Lord who was seated at the right hand of God the Father? How would it be possible for the Messiah, who is seated at the right hand of the Father, who will one day trample all enemies, to be David’s son? How is that possible? David saw the Lord sitting at the right hand of God and identified Him as the Lord. So how could one be the Lord and still be David’s son?

Jesus does not answer it for them. But the answer is simple. **In order for this Divine Messiah to be David's Son, He would need to leave heaven and be born in the Davidic line. In other words, He would have to have an incarnation.** The Lord would need to become a man. What would be needed to have this happen is for a Divine man to come to this earth who was God but also was a real human in the line of David. So the Messiah could not be just a human. The Messiah would have to be the God-human. They had been identifying Christ as a teacher and Jesus says, "I am much more than that."

This very text would be referred to by Peter in relating it to Jesus Christ (Acts 2:34-36) and by the writer of Hebrews who would also relate it to Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:13).

Furthermore, when Jesus alludes to the fact that David predicted that the Messiah would be seated at God's right hand until the proper time, He would have to come into this world as a real human and then ascend back up into heaven and sit at the right hand of God until the proper time for Him to take over as the King of Kings.

What this proves is that Jesus is the God/man, Savior, Messiah and King, predicted to come in the O.T.. He was standing in the Temple right before them and He was teaching them. The crowd loved it.

#### **TEACHING #2 – Jesus teaches about the Scribe's hypocrisy. 12:38-40**

Earlier, Jesus had exposed the Pharisees and the Herodians (Mark 8:15). Now Jesus goes after the Scribes. I love what one commentator said, there was a "divine rage" that Jesus had against these religious leaders. These were the men who pretended to be the religious scholars.

The Scribes were religious frauds. They were play-acting hypocrites. They were not interested in searching out the truth of the Scriptures. They were not interested in opening up the Word of God. They were phonies. They loved the religious pomp. They loved power; they loved praise; they loved position; and they loved prosperity.

They played the religious game to the hilt. They were not right with God. They did not have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. It was all a big show. Jesus knew it and He wanted the crowd to know it.

Jesus warned the people to "Beware" of them. In other words, you need to spot these guys and recognize them for what they are and who they are. These were proud, arrogant phonies. They loved the limelight and they loved to be involved with the people of "high social status and position."

Jesus specifically points out seven qualities:

**Quality #1** - They like to walk around wearing long, religious robes. **12:38a**

These religious leaders loved to wear their fine robes. These were long, flowing robes that were worn for ceremonial or festal occasions. These were robes that typically were worn for temple service activities. But these Scribes loved to put those robes on and walk around wearing them. They loved to show off their religious status. They loved to have the people look at them as some religious leader. Actually they should have been in their study carefully studying the Scriptures so they could understand and teach the truth of God, but instead they are strutting around in their long, religious robes.

**Quality #2** - They like to go to public places to be respectfully greeted. **12:38b**

These Scribes would go to the market place and walking around so people could look at them and then stroke their egos by honorably greeting them. We know from Matthew's account that people would call them "Rabbi," "Master" and "Father" (Matt. 23:7-10).

The Jerusalem Talmud taught that "a person must greet one who is greater than he in knowledge of Torah." So the people were taught that when you see one of the Scribes wearing their long, flowing robes, you be sure to greet them with high titles and respect.

**Quality #3** - They like to sit in the chief seats in the synagogue. **12:39a**

Now the chief seats were the most important seats in the synagogue. Most believe that this was a bench that faced the congregation in front of the ark containing the sacred scrolls. This particular spot was reserved for very honored guests and those recognized as high-ranking religious leaders. The Scribes love to sit in those seats.

**Quality #4** - They like to have the great places of honor at the banquets. **12:39b**

Banquets were very special in the first century. The best seats and the best food were given to the most honored guests. In Luke 14:7-11, Jesus gave an illustration of being invited to a banquet. He specifically taught that the thing to do when invited was to go to the last place of the table, not the first and most honored place.

What these Scribes did was always go to the first place. They were first in line. They wanted to be the biggest and the best.

**Quality #5** - They devour widows' houses to get their money. **12:40a**

The phrase "devour widows' houses" probably means they tried to get their hands on the estates of widow's homes. Often times these leaders would be asked to act as some guardian or executer and they would manipulate it so they got everything. Here were the religious leaders and they were stealing money from widows.

**Quality #6** - They offer long, impressive prayers. **12:40b**

These guys prayed for show. They prayed long prayers for show. That is all it was. It was praying to impress the people; it was not praying to move the heart of God. When you are a leader and you do anything for religious show, including pray, there will be serious accountability. These religious leaders did not have hearts right with God; it was a big sham.

**Quality #7** - They will receive greater condemnation. **12:40c**

Leaders will be held highly accountable to God for what they did. This point is brought out in many different passages, both O.T. and N.T.. James says that teachers will receive a stricter judgment than parishioners (James 3:1).

**TEACHING #3** – Jesus teaches about giving sacrificially. **12:41-44**

**Verse 41** says Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and He was just watching people coming to give their offerings.

The treasury was where the people placed their offerings. There were 13 brass chests called trumpets because they were shaped like an inverted horn. It was narrow at the top and enlarged at the bottom.

According to the Mishnah, each of these chests had some inscription on it that designated what the offering was to be. According to Kent Hughes, some of the categories were: Old Shekel dues; Bird offerings; Young birds for whole offering; Wood; Frankincense; Gold for the Mercy-seat. On six of the chests were the words “Free-will offerings” (*Mark*, p. 316).

Since it was Passover time, people were bringing many offerings to the Temple and Jesus was sitting near it watching all of it. Sometimes it is fun to sit and watch people.

Now according to **verse 41**, Jesus saw many rich people coming to the Temple and giving large sums of money. Now we cannot assume that this was a bad thing. The fact is many of these wealthy people probably gave their offerings out of good motives. These rich people may have truly loved God and wanted to give God an offering and they gave a large offering.

But according to **verse 42**, there was a widow who was very poor who came and put in “two small copper coins.”

Now a widow’s life in Biblical times was a lot different than in our time. For the most part widows were dirt poor. No social security, no life insurance, no pension, no government programs. A widow was dirt poor.

Jesus was watching and He saw a “poor widow” come into the Temple and she put in “two small copper coins” that amounts to one cent. The Greek word used for “coin” is lepta, which was a tiny, thin coin. In fact, the word means “tiny thing.”

Now the word “lepta” is the plural of the word “lepton” which was the smallest and least valuable coin in circulation. Scholars have calculated that it was worth 1/128 of the value of a denarius, which was a day’s wage. What this would calculate to be is about six minutes of your average daily wage.

Let’s use as a basis for this amount a wage of \$15 per hour. At \$15 per hour, you make \$120 per day. So you work for 8 hours which is 480 minutes and you make \$120. Now what that means is that you make 25 cents per minute. So in modern calculation six minutes would be equivalent to \$1.50.

Now if you put this in our culture, all this widow had to her name was \$1.50. That is it and she decided to give it as an offering. This is a miniscule amount for an offering.

This was no gold brick here. The dollar calculation was next to nothing, but the eternal calculation was staggering.

According to **verse 43**, Jesus called His disciples to Him and He said do you see that poor woman. I want you to know she put in more money than “all the contributors to the treasury.” I am sure that the crowd was totally impressed with the big givers. The elite rich were bringing in their big dollars and this one poor widow quietly slips up to the offering plate and throws in two copper coins.

Jesus says those two coins of offering is the biggest offering given here because that woman just put in all she had to live on out of her poverty because she loved God.

The other people were giving from their surplus. They give, but they have money in the bank. If they need more they can go get it. But this woman did not have any surplus. There was no money in the bank. What she gave was it. She loved God and gave God everything she had.

Offerings do mean something to God. He keeps track of the amount given and He also knows the sacrifice behind the amount given.

What a contrast between the Scribes and the widow. The Scribes were strutting around interested building their “personal empire” and the widow is interested in the work of God.

Beware that we have a true relationship with Jesus Christ. Beware that we are not just putting on some religious show.